

The Lust Murderer

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On August 29, 1975, the nude, mutilated body of a 25-year-old mother of two was found near Columbia, S.C. Both breasts had been removed, the reproductive system had been displaced, numerous cut and stab wounds were evidenced by the body, and there was indication of anthropophagy.¹

This was the scene of a lust murder, one of the most heinous crimes committed by man. While not a common occurrence, it is one which frightens and arouses the public as does no other crime.

Of primary concern are those factors which differentiate the lust murder from the more common sadistic homicide, physical evidence present at the scene which may assist in determining the responsible individual(s), and possible personality characteristics of the murderer. It is not the authors' contention that the material presented is applicable to all such crimes or their perpetrators, but rather that the majority of the crimes and offenders involved will exhibit the characteristics set forth. The data presented here have not been quantified, but are based upon the authors' examination of case reports, interviews with investigative personnel, and a careful review of the literature. Minor variations of the terms used may occur, depending on the source of reference.

It is the authors' contention that the lust murder is unique and is distinguished from the sadistic homicide by the involvement of a mutilating attack or displacement of the breasts, rectum, or genitals. Further, while there are always exceptions, basically two types of individuals commit the lust murder. These individuals will be labeled as the Organized Nonsocial and the Disorganized Asocial personalities.

The Organized Nonsocial

The organized nonsocial (nonsocial) lust murderer exhibits complete indifference to the interests and welfare of society and displays an irresponsible and self-centered attitude. While disliking people in general, he does not avoid them. Instead, he is capable of displaying an amiable facade for as long as it takes to manipulate people toward his own personal goal. He is a methodical and cunning individual, as demonstrated in the perpetration of his crime. He is fully cognizant of the criminality of his act and its impact on society, and it is for this reason that he commits the crime. He generally lives some distance from the crime scene and will cruise, seeking a victim. Dr. Robert P. Brittain, author of "The Sadistic Murderer," has stated, "They (sadistic murderers) are excited by cruelty, whether in books or in films, in fact or fantasy."²

The Disorganized Asocial

The disorganized asocial (asocial) lust murderer exhibits primary characteristics of societal aversion. This individual prefers his own company to that of others and would be typified as a loner. He experiences difficulty in negotiating interpersonal relationships and consequently feels rejected and lonely. He lacks the cunning of the nonsocial type and commits the crime in a more frenzied and less methodical manner. The crime is likely to be committed in close proximity to his residence or place of employment, where he feels secure and more at ease.

The Crime

The lust murder is premeditated in the obsessive fantasies of the perpetrator. Yet, the killer may act on the "spur-of-the-moment" when the opportunity presents itself. That is to say, the murderer has precisely planned the crime in his fantasies, but has not consciously decided to act out those fantasies until the moment of the crime. Consequently, the victim is typically unknown to the killer, a fact borne out by the cases studied by the authors.

The location of the victim's body may be indicative of the type of murderer involved. Typically, the asocial type leaves the body at the scene of death, and while the location is not open to the casual observer, there has been no attempt to conceal the body. Conversely, the nonsocial type commits the crime in a secluded or isolated location and may later transport it to an area where it is likely to be found.



While there may be no conscious intent to be arrested, the nonsocial type wants the excitement derived from the publicity about the body's discovery and its impact on the victim's community.

The lust murder is committed in a brutally sadistic manner. While the victim may be either male or female, the crime is predominantly heterosexual and intraracial in nature. The victim's body exhibits gross mutilation and/or displacement of the breasts, rectum, or genitals and may have been subjected to excessive stabbing or slashing with a sharp instrument. The victim's death typically occurs shortly following abduction or attack, and the mutilation that takes place follows death. Dr. J. Paul de River notes in his book, *Crime and the Sexual Psychopath*:

"The lust murderer, usually, after killing his victim, tortures, cuts, maims or slashes the victim in the regions on or about the genitalia, rectum, breast in the female, and about the neck, throat and buttocks, as usually these parts contain strong sexual significance to him, and serve as sexual stimulus."³

If, however, there is physical or medical evidence indicating the victim was subjected to torture or mutilation prior to death, this factor indicates that the perpetrator was the nonsocial rather than the asocial type.

Seldom will the lust murderer use a firearm to kill, for he experiences too little psychosexual gratification with such an impersonal weapon. Most frequently, death results from strangulation, blunt force, or the use of a pointed, sharp instrument. The asocial type is more prone to use a weapon of opportunity and may leave it at the scene, while the nonsocial type may carry the murder weapon with him and take it when departing the scene. Therefore, the murderer's choice of weapon and its proximity to the scene can be greatly significant to the investigation.

Dr. de River comments that the instrument itself may be symbolic to the murderer and he may place it in a position near the victim. This is a form of pride and exhibitionistic behavior and can be sexually gratifying to him.⁴

The investigator may find that the victim has been bitten on the breasts, buttocks, neck, abdomen, thighs, or genitals, as these body areas have sexual associations. Limb or breast amputation, or in some instances total dissection, may have taken place. Dis-

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section of the victim's body, when committed by the nonsocial type, may be an attempt to hinder the identification of the victim. The asocial individual approaches his victim in much the same way as an inquisitive child with a new toy. He involves himself in an exploratory examination of the sexually significant parts of the body in an attempt to determine how they function and appear beneath the surface.

Occasionally, it will be noted that the murderer has smeared the victim's blood on himself, the victim, or the surface on which the body rests. This activity is more frequently associated with the asocial type and relates to the uncontrollable frenzy of the attack.

Penis penetration of the victim is not to be expected from the asocial individual, but is predominantly associated with the nonsocial type, even to the extent of "necrophilia."⁵ These activities on the nonsocial's part reflect his desire to outrage society and call attention to his total disdain for societal acceptance. The asocial type more commonly inserts foreign objects into the body orifices in a probing and curiosity-motivated, yet brutal, manner. Evidence of ejaculation may be found on or near the victim or her clothing.

Frequently, the murderer will take a "souvenir," normally an object or article of clothing belonging to the victim, but occasionally it may be a more personal reminder of the encounter—a

finger, a lock of hair, or a part of the body with sexual association. The souvenir is taken to enable the murderer to relive the scene in later fantasies. The killer here is acting out his fantasy, and complete possession of the victim is part of that fantasy. As previously mentioned, the perpetrator may commit an anthropophagic act and such an act is indicative of asocial involvement.

Finally, the scene itself will exhibit much less physical evidence when the murderer is the nonsocial type. As stated, the individual categorized as the nonsocial type is very cunning and more methodical than the asocial type, who commits a more frenzied assault. It is interesting to note, however, that both types may be compelled to return to the scene, albeit for different reasons. While the asocial type may return to engage in further mutilation or to relive the experience, the nonsocial type returns to determine if the body has been discovered and to check on the progress of the investigation. Instances have occurred when the nonsocial type changed the body's location to insure its discovery.

Of interest is the almost obsessive desire of the nonsocial type to assess the police investigation, even to the extent of frequenting police "hang-outs" to eavesdrop on discussions of unsolved crimes, or in some manner, inserting himself into the investigation. In one case, the murderer returned to the scene after it had been examined by police laboratory technicians and deposited articles of clothing worn by the victim on the day she died. In both of two other cases, the killer visited the cemetery site of the victim and left articles belonging to the victim on her grave. It is as though he were involved in a "game" with the authorities. Such actions appear to further his "will to power"⁶ or desire to control.

Portrait of the Lust Murderer

What set of circumstances create the individual who becomes the lust murderer? The authors do not possess the expertise to explain the multiple and complex casual factors associated with the psychological development of the individual who commits such a heinous crime. But, it is generally accepted that the foundation of the personality is formed within the first few years of life. While extreme stress, frequent narcotic use, or alcohol abuse can cause personality disorganization in later life, it is the early years that are critical to the personality structure and development.

Seldom does the lust murderer come from an environment of love and understanding. It is more likely that he was an abused or neglected child who experienced a great deal of conflict in his early life and was unable to develop and use adequate coping devices (i.e. defense mechanisms). Had he been able to do so, he would have withstood the stresses placed on him and developed normally in early childhood. It must be emphasized that many individuals are raised in environments not conducive to healthy psychological development, yet they become productive citizens. These stresses, frustrations, and subsequent anxieties, along with the inability to cope with them, may lead the individual to withdraw from the society which he perceives as hostile and threatening.

Through this internalization process, he becomes secluded and isolated from others and may eventually select suicide as an alternative to a life of loneliness and frustration. The authors have designated this reaction to life as disorganized asocial. This type possesses a poor self-image and secretly rejects the society which he feels rejects him. Family and associates would describe him a nice, quiet person who keeps to himself, but who never quite realized his potential. During adolescence, he may have engaged in voyeuristic activities or the theft of feminine clothing. Such activities serve as a substitute for his inability to approach women sexually in a nature and confident manner.

The individual designated by the authors as the organized nonsocial type harbors similar feelings of hostility, but elects not to withdraw and internalize his hostility. Rather, he overtly expresses it through aggressive and seemingly senseless acts against society. Typically, he begins to demonstrate his hostility as he passes through puberty and into adolescence. He would be described as a troublemaker and a manipulator of people, concerned only for himself. He experiences difficulties with family, friends,

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and "authority figures" through antisocial acts which may include homicide. Thomas Strentz and Conrad Hassel, in the June 1978 issue of *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, wrote of a youth who had first murdered at the age of 15 and was committed to a mental institution. After his release, he murdered and dismembered eight women.⁷ It is the nonsocial's aim to get even with society and inflict pain and punishment upon others.

The Role of Fantasy

As noted, the lust murder is premeditated in obsessive fantasies experienced by both the asocial and nonsocial murderers. Fantasy provides them an avenue of escape from a world of hate and rejection. Dr. James J. Reinhardt in his book, *Sex Perversions and Sex Crimes*, has written:

"A study of these cases almost invariably reveals a long struggle against what Reik calls the 'forward thrust.' By fantasy the murderer attempts to wall himself in against the fatal act, while at the same time gratifying the compulsive psychic demands in the development and use of *fantasy*.

These sadistic [fantasies] seem always to have preceded the brutal act of *lust* murder. These *fantasies* take all sorts of grotesque and cruel forms. The pervert, on this level of degeneracy, may resort to pornographic pictures, grotesque and cruel literary episodes, out of which he weaves fantasies. On these, his imagination dwells until he loses all contact with reality, only to find himself suddenly impelled to carry his fantasies into the world of actuality. This is done, apparently, by drawing human objects into the *fantasy*."⁸

James Russell Odom, tried and convicted with James Clayton Lawson for the brutal lust murder described at the beginning of this article, stated that while he and Lawson were at a mental institution, they would express their fantasies about women:

"(Odom) raping them and Lawson mutilating them . . . (we had fantasized so much that at times I didn't know what was real)." ⁹

If he acts out the fantasy (commits the crime), his goal will be to destroy the victim and thereby become the sole possessor. James Lawson (mentioned above) is quoted as saying:

"Then I cut her throat so she would not scream. . . . at this time I wanted to cut her body so she would not look like a person and destroy her so she would not exist. I began to cut on her body. I remember cutting her breasts off. After this, all I remember is that I kept cutting on her body."¹⁰

The victim may represent something he desires sexually, but is unable to approach. Lawson speaks again, "I did not rape the girl. I only wanted to destroy her."¹¹

Rarely encountered is the asocial type who is capable of normal heterosexual relationships. He may desire such relationships, but he also fears them. Dr. Reinhardt, on an interview with a famous lust murderer, wrote:

"... he at first denied ever attempting any sex play with girls. Two days later with one of his rare shows of emotion he said, looking much ashamed, that twice, later correcting himself to eight times, he had touched girls 'on the breasts' and then pressed 'on the leg.' Always having done this, he would immediately burst into tears and 'be upset and unable to sleep'."¹²

The Psychological Profile

A psychological profile is an educated attempt to provide investigative agencies with specific information as to the type of individual who committed a certain crime. It must be clearly stated at the outset that what can be done in this area is limited, and prescribed investigative procedures should not be suspended, altered, or replaced by receipt of a profile. Rather, the material provided should be considered and employed as another investigative tool. The process is an art and not a science, and while it may be applicable to many types of investigations, its use is restricted primarily to crimes of violence or potential violence.

When prepared by the FBI, the profile may include the perpetrator's age, race, sex, socioeconomic and marital status, educational level, arrest history, location of residence in relation to the scene, and certain personality traits.

A profile is based on characteristic patterns or factors of uniqueness that distinguish certain individuals from the general population. In the case of lust murder, clues to those factors of uniqueness are found on the victim's body and at the scene and would include the amount and location of mutilation involved, type of weapon used, cause of death, and the position of the body. The profiler is searching for clues which indicate the probable personality configuration of the responsible individual.

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In preparing the profile, it is preferable to have access to the scene prior to its disturbance. In most instances, this is impossible. In lieu of being at the scene, the profiler must be provided investigative reports, autopsy protocols, detailed photographs of the body, scene, and surrounding area, as well as a map depicting the victim's last known location in relation to its present location and any known information pertaining to the victim and her activities.

There are violent crimes in which there is an absence of uniqueness; therefore, it is not possible to provide a profile. However, this is not likely to occur in the case of a lust murder.

Summary

While not a common occurrence, the lust murder frightens and arouses the public as does no other crime. The lust murder involves the death and subsequent mutilating attack of the breasts, rectum, and genital areas of the victim. The crime is typically heterosexual and intraracial in nature and is committed by one of two types of individuals: The disorganized asocial personality, or the organized nonsocial personality.

The organized nonsocial type feels rejection by and hatred for the society in which he lives. His hostile feelings are manifested overtly, and the lust murder is the final expression of the hatred he feels. The disorganized asocial type also feels rejection and hatred for his world, but withdraws and internalizes his feelings, living within a world of fantasy until he acts out that fantasy with his victim.

While commonalities exist in the commission of the lust murder, there are certain factors which may indicate the personality type involved. These factors include the location of the body, evidence of torture or mutilation having occurred prior to death, smearing of the victim's blood, evidence of penis penetration or anthropophagy, and the availability of physical evidence at the scene.

The crime is premeditated in the obsessive fantasies experienced by both the asocial and the nonsocial types, yet it is a crime of opportunity, one in which the victim is not usually known to the murderer.

The use of psychological profiling in such crimes may be of assistance in determining the personality type involved. It is a search for clues indicating the probable personality configuration of the responsible individual(s). It is a useful tool, but must not alter, suspend, or replace prescribed investigative procedures. **FBI**

Footnotes

¹Anthropophagy: Consuming the victim's flesh or blood.

²Robert P. Brittain, "The Sadistic Murderer," *Medical Science and the Law*, vol. IV (1970), p. 202.

³J. Paul de River, *Crime and the Sexual Psychopath* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1950), p. 40.

⁴J. Paul de River, *The Sexual Criminal* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1950), p. 233.

⁵Necrophilia: A desire for relations with the dead.

⁶Calvin S. Hall and Lindsey Gardner, *Theories of Personality*, 2d ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1970).

⁷Thomas Strentz and Conrad V. Hassel, "The Sociopath—A Criminal Enigma," *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, (June 1978).

⁸James J. Reinhardt, *Sex Perversions and Sex Crimes* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1957), pp. 208-209.

⁹Statement of Odom as reported by *The Record* (newspaper) April 7, 1976, 1-A.

¹⁰Statement made to South Carolina law enforcement authorities by James Clayton Lawson on September 3, 1975.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Reinhardt, pp. 221-222.